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## GREAT BRITAIN AND THE DUTCH QUESTION IN 1787-1788

THE first great event of an international character which confronted the younger Pitt in his ministry was the Dutch Question. It would take us too far back to describe the origins of the disputes between the hereditary Stadholder and the States of some of the provinces of the Dutch Netherlands. They were complicated by the questions at issue between the provinces and the States General, representing the United Provinces. It must suffice to say that the federal constitution was settled by the compact arrived at in 1747, whereby the stadholderate (which had been suppressed in 1702) was restored as a perpetual office, hereditary in the House of Orange. The relations between the provinces were also adjusted; but neither these nor the powers of the Stadholder were defined with sufficient clearness to avert disputes in the future. The constitution of 1747 was confirmed in 1766. Nevertheless the troubles which followed, especially the war with England in 1780-1783, brought the whole question to a climax in the succeeding years.

The difficulties resulting from a loose federal tie, and the different constitutions and customs of the component provinces, concerning which the Dutch themselves were generally ill informed,<sup>1</sup> increased owing to the incompetence of the Stadholder, William V. The grandson of George II. of England, trained by his mother the Princess Anne to love and admire her country, he early ruffled the feelings of his subjects. During his minority he was under the tutelage of the Duke Louis of Brunswick, who made some encroachments on the military prerogatives of the provinces. Even when

<sup>1</sup> See Grenville's letter of July 31, 1787, to Pitt from the Hague, in *The Dropmore Papers*, III. 410.

For the Dutch disputes see Jacobi, *Geschichte der Siebenjährigen Verwirrungen . . . in den Vereinigten Niederlanden*, 2 vols. (Halle, 1789); Schloezer, *Ludwig Ernst, Herzog zu Braunschweig und Lüneburg* (Goettingen, 1787); G. Ellis, *History of the Late Revolution in the Dutch Republic* (London, 1787); De Pfau, *Histoire de la Campagne des Prussiens en Hollande en 1787* (Berlin, 1790); P. de Witt, *Une Invasion Prussienne en Hollande en 1787* (Paris, 1886); F. Luckwaldt, *Die Englisch-Preussische Allianz von 1788* (Leipzig, 1902); Hertzberg, *Recueil des . . . Traités*, etc. (1778-1789), 2 vols. (Berlin, 1789); von Ranke, *Die Deutschen Mächte und der Fürstenbund*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1871-1872); H. T. Colenbrander, *De Patriottentijd hoofdzakelijk naar buitenlandsche Bescheiden* (Hague, 1897, in progress).

the duke was got rid of, foreign influences reigned supreme at the Stadholder's court. Unimpressive in person and torpid in mind, he presented a complete contrast to his consort Wilhelmina, sister of the prince who was soon to become Frederick William II. of Prussia, who possessed not only tact and energy but also the power of inspiring enthusiasm. Sir James Harris who went as British minister to the Hague in December, 1784, wrote soon afterward: "I discover daily many great and good qualities in this Princess: she has a due sense of her situation, and spirit and abilities *equal to anything*; but he, from that contemptible jealousy ever attendant on imbecility, had rather be crushed by his own awkwardness than saved by her dexterity."<sup>2</sup>

The party which sought to lessen his powers, and probably to abolish the stadholderate, also strove to weaken the federal tie between the provinces and to undermine the authority of the States General and the Council of State. This party, styled the Patriots, had long enjoyed the support of France. The ambassadors sent from Versailles, first Vauguyon and then Vêrac, encouraged them in their assaults on the central institutions; and after the war, the party of the constitution, or Orange party, which favored an alliance with England or Prussia, steadily lost ground, partly owing to the inactivity of the prince and the unpopularity of England, but also because Frederick the Great, uncle of the Princess of Orange, refused to support her consort, and even pressed him to come to terms with France. Though Pitt and his foreign secretary, the Marquis of Carmarthen, sent Earl Cornwallis on an informal mission to Berlin for the purpose of framing a friendly understanding between the two powers, mainly on the Dutch Question, yet the old monarch declined the proposal and rebuked his envoy at London for lending it his support.<sup>3</sup> The cause of the Prince of Orange therefore declined, despite the tact and energy which Sir James Harris displayed in its defense. That envoy on December 14, 1784, reported that the British party was "dejected, depressed and divided". But he added on January 4, 1785, that if the prince acted with energy, two-thirds of the country would obey his call.<sup>4</sup>

At that time, and indeed throughout the years 1785 and 1786, Pitt refused to allow Harris a free hand at the Hague. His instructions were to do all that was possible by diplomatic means to prevent the fall of the Stadholder, but on no account to commit Great Britain to a policy which might lead to war. The position of foreign

<sup>2</sup> *Diaries and Correspondence of the first Earl of Malmesbury*, II. 97.

<sup>3</sup> *Cornwallis Correspondence*, I. 206-210; Hertzberg, *Recueil*, II. 413-416.

<sup>4</sup> *Malmesbury Diaries*, II. 79, 93. See also Colenbrander, *op. cit.*, I. (Appendix), for documents showing the decline of the Stadholder's party.

affairs no less than the urgent need of retrenchment and reform at home called for the greatest caution; and we must therefore take a brief survey of the international situation, which, as will appear, determined Pitt's action in the Dutch Question.

A perusal of the letters of Pitt, Carmarthen and Harris at this time shows the extreme difficulty of gaining an ally for the beaten and discredited island power. Proposal after proposal was made to Vienna and Petersburg only to be waved aside or rudely repulsed. It is significant of the deep distrust haunting the courts of London and Berlin, that, with the exception of the tentative overtures made through Cornwallis, no advances were made by either of these governments. Resentment at the events of 1761 was too keen at Berlin, and suspicion of Frederick's supposed designs on Hanover was too rife at Windsor, for any friendly intercourse. British ministers and their envoys alike believed that either Russia or Austria was their natural ally. Of the two, Russia was preferred, an alliance with Emperor Joseph II. being valued mainly because it would dissolve the "unnatural" union of the houses of Hapsburg and Bourbon. The letters and memoranda which passed between Pitt and Carmarthen show that the two statesmen were in general agreement, except that Pitt adhered more resolutely to a peaceful policy and felt rather less animus against France than his foreign minister. This was especially the case in the year 1786, the year of the commercial treaty with France. Even then, however, Pitt felt suspicious of French *policy*, as his letters to Eden amply show.<sup>5</sup>

The position was therefore exceedingly difficult in the years 1785 and 1786. The hostility of France was always to be feared; she had the alliance of Emperor Joseph II.; and he in his turn was closely connected, though not by any formal treaty, with Catharine II. Further, when George III. in his electoral capacity joined the Fürstenbund (August, 1785), those sovereigns manifested their annoyance in a very marked degree.<sup>6</sup> Yet so deep-seated was the mutual distrust of the courts of London and Berlin that, despite the efforts of Hertzberg and of Ewart, the British secretary of legation at Berlin, no advance was made toward an Anglo-Prussian *entente*. In fact the two states felt almost identical reasons for moving with extreme caution, namely, that any decided action might lead to the formation of a triple alliance between the imperial courts and France. On August 8, 1785, Carmarthen wrote to Harris setting forth the threatening language of Woronzoff, Russian ambassador at London, as to the hostile compact which Catharine II. would

<sup>5</sup> *Auckland Journals*, I. 106, 127, 266.

<sup>6</sup> Hertzberg, *Recueil*, II. 292 ff.; *Malmesbury Diaries*, II. 131-135.

form with France as well as Austria in case Hanover joined the Fürstenbund.<sup>7</sup> The threats were very properly scorned by George III.; but the danger was so far real as to impose the greatest caution. Harris was so imbued by the anti-Prussian spirit prevalent in the British diplomatic service that, in a "private" letter of August 23, 1785, to Carmarthen, he replied in the following jaunty terms: "As for the King of Prussia, if he is sincere, he will die; if not, he will of course deceive us; in both cases he should be used only as a tool; and by being forced to speak out himself, compel others to declare themselves." On September 9 he informed Carmarthen that he had striven hard to convince the Princess of Orange that England would help her more than Prussia would. He hoped greatly to gain her confidence—"as, if ever Europe recovers its senses sufficiently to admit of the formation of a wise system, the great *remora* which would stand in the way of this country [the Dutch Netherlands] becoming part of it would be the Princess of Orange's predilection for Prussia."<sup>8</sup>

On October 9, 1785, at the time when France was about to mediate between the emperor and the Dutch Netherlands respecting the Scheldt and Maestricht disputes, Harris sent to Carmarthen two memoirs. The former referred to plans for retarding the course of that mediation and the projected Franco-Dutch treaty; in the latter he thus described the measures which should be used for the recovery of Great Britain's position in Europe:

HAGUE, October 12, 1785.

In order ultimately to separate the House of Austria from that of Bourbon, which ought to be the chief and systematick pursuit of Great Britain, no approaches should at this moment be made towards forming an alliance either with Prussia or the Emperor, but a sufficient degree of intimacy kept up at both these Courts to leave them hopes that they will make part of a system we wish to form with Russia, towards which Court all our negotiations ought to be directed. We may safely tell the Empress that she labours under a glaring error in supposing that the accession of Hanover to the German League is an obstacle in the way of an alliance between Her Imperial Majesty and Great Britain. That it does not even militate against an alliance with the Emperor, and that it by no means amounts to a proof, as her Ministers affect to say, that England is determined at all rates [*sic*] to unite itself with Prussia. That the recent friendly and confidential overtures made at Petersburg, and which went even to an indirect proposal of a Triple Alliance with the two Imperial Courts, prove beyond a doubt that a contrary opinion prevails in the English Cabinet, and that it depended on the Emperor alone, if he had known how to set a just value on the friendly offers which came from thence, to have consolidated the most wise and most salutary system he can ever adopt.

<sup>7</sup> Brit. Mus., Add. MSS., 28060.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

That, whatever the sentiments of His Imperial Majesty may be at this moment, England, in order to give the Emprèss of Russia an undoubted instance of confidence, and with a view to do away [with] the very unjustifiable suspicions she seems disposed to entertain, does not scruple to say under the seal of the greatest secrecy, that no thoughts exist in the minds of the British Ministers of entering into any systematick engagements with the Court of Berlin, *unless compelled to them by events*. That to leave no doubt of the veracity of this assertion, the Court of London is ready to conclude immediately a separate treaty of defensive alliance with Russia and Denmark on such conditions as Her Imperial Majesty may deem the most advantageous to their common interests and the best adapted to the present times. It will be then evident that England cannot have any engagements contrary to the interests of Russia either in Germany or elsewhere, particularly as the Empress herself acknowledges the Treaties of Westphalia and Teschen to be sufficient suretys for the Germanic constitution.

Should this Triple Alliance succeed, besides the weight England would derive from having a footing on the Continent, it will greatly tend to facilitate the putting an end to the Treaty of 1756,<sup>9</sup> since not only the insinuations of the Empress may greatly contribute to open the Emperor's eyes, but also his fears will be awakened, and he will be apprehensive that, if he refuses a connection with England, when that Court has formed one with Petersburg, [that] his interests there must sink and those of the King of Prussia rise.<sup>10</sup>

It is not a little curious that the diplomatist who three years later won fame and a peerage by his skilful framing of an Anglo-Prussian alliance at Loo, should here scout the idea of such a connection. Carmarthen returned a brief but friendly answer; and the British Foreign Office continued to angle vainly for support at the two imperial courts, even when Frederick William II. succeeded to the crown of the Hohenzollerns (August 17, 1786). In truth, that event made little difference in the relations of Prussia to Great Britain and Holland.<sup>11</sup> The new monarch repulsed the entreaties of his sister, the Princess of Orange, for help. The Prussian envoy at the Hague, Thulemeyer, continued to intrigue with the Patriots, against the Stadholder; so that finally the princess begged Frederick William to impose on Thulemeyer at least a policy of neutrality.<sup>12</sup>

In such circumstances the active intervention of Great Britain would have been worse than useless. Carmarthen aimed chiefly at weakening the Austro-French compact, but with little success.<sup>13</sup> It was therefore in vain that Sir James Harris continued to assure

<sup>9</sup> The alliance between France and Austria framed chiefly by Kaunitz.

<sup>10</sup> Brit. Mus., Add. MSS., 28060.

<sup>11</sup> Lecky, V. 80, is incorrect in saying that his accession made a great change. No change was observable till June-July, 1787.

<sup>12</sup> F. O., Prussia, no. 11, Dalrymple to Carmarthen, April 21, 1787.

<sup>13</sup> *Political Memoranda of the Duke of Leeds*, edited by Mr. Oscar Browning, pp. 106, 107.

ministers that the United Provinces were about to fall under the control of France. The successful inroads of the Patriots on the Stadholder's power aroused little interest at Whitehall; and when Harris came over to give ministers fuller information on these complex affairs, Pitt still adhered strictly to his policy of neutrality, though a majority of ministers now desired actively to intervene.<sup>14</sup> All that was done was to vote a sum of £20,000 for secret use by the provinces loyal to the Stadholder; on June 10 the further sum of £70,000 was accorded to Harris for that purpose.<sup>15</sup>

It is at this point, shortly before the crisis arrived, that we may expand the narrative, adding those parts of the most important despatches which throw light on the situation.

On his return to the Hague, Harris found that the Patriots had gained complete mastery of Amsterdam; and on June 15 the States General were weak enough to admit the deputies sent by the illegal States of Utrecht, that city having broken away from the rest of the province and set up a legislature in hostility to the provincial States. This accession of strength to the Patriots in the States General enabled them to pass measures depriving the Stadholder of the right to order the march or disposal of the armed forces in the provinces outside the province of Holland, that province having already adopted that rigorous measure.

Four days later, however, the efforts of Harris, probably furthered by British gold, availed to secure the rejection of these decrees.<sup>16</sup> Thus the majority in the States General was kept for the Stadholder—a matter of the utmost importance, as it prevented a formal demand of that body for the intervention of France, which would probably have led to war. Pitt and Carmarthen still hoped to settle matters by diplomacy or by a friendly mediation; and on June 6, 1787, the latter sent a despatch to Harris stating that if the province of Holland (which was more populous and wealthy than all the other provinces taken together) seceded from the Union and appealed to France, care must be taken that an application for the mediation of Great Britain should come from the four loyal provinces (Gelderland, Friesland, Zeeland and Utrecht) and from the two doubtful provinces, Groningen and Overijssel, if it were possible. He added that “Nothing could lay so good a ground for our further interference, or so much dispose the nation in favour of the Republic, as a direct application from the majority of the Provinces, and a

<sup>14</sup> See Harris's notes on the cabinet meeting of May 23, 1787, at which he was present, in *Malmesbury Diaries*, II. 303–306.

<sup>15</sup> F. O., Holland, no. 14, Carmarthen to Harris, June 10, 1787.

<sup>16</sup> *Malmesbury Diaries*, II. 313–319.

prospect of reviving a connection which has repeatedly proved so beneficial to both countries."<sup>17</sup>

In the early summer of 1787 the Stadholder and the Princess of Orange rallied their friends, and hoped to secure soon the reduction of the city of Utrecht by force. The prospects of the "constitutional" party were therefore far from hopeless, despite the aid constantly though secretly given by France to the Free Corps. These bodies of armed burghers in the spring and summer of 1787 forcibly changed the regency, or government, of several towns, despoiled the property of opponents, and drew a cordon along the borders of the province of Holland so as to ensure the subjection of all its towns.

The question of intervention therefore became acute. The Princess of Orange, from her safe retreat in the fortress of Nimeguen, had sought to stir up Frederick William of Prussia to her assistance, and had ventured to send assurances that he would have the support of Great Britain. Ewart, the able and energetic secretary of the British legation at Berlin, reported to Carmarthen on June 12 that the Prussian statesman, Hertzberg, had been assured by the Princess of Orange of "the very favourable and encouraging assurances they had got at Nimeguen of the good disposition of the Court of Great Britain to maintain the constitution of the Republic, and that the effects should be made manifest when circumstances required it."<sup>18</sup> She therefore begged Hertzberg to concert a plan of operations with England. Hertzberg sent her letter on to the king and hoped for good results. For many months that statesman and Ewart had been working hard to bring about an Anglo-Prussian alliance, but hitherto in vain. The Dutch Question, as they saw, ought to lead to such an arrangement; and soon the action of the Princess of Orange in determining to make her way through the cordon of the Free Corps and proceed to the Hague for the encouragement of her friends, brought the question to an acute phase.

She would scarcely have taken that step had she not known that Frederick William had recently been annoyed by the refusal of the French court to arrange with him a plan of settlement not unfavorable to the Stadholder. Montmorin, the French foreign minister, replied in very curt terms to the Prussian proposal, accusing the Stadholder of being the cause of the troubles, and warning the King of Prussia that any intervention on his part in support of the prince

<sup>17</sup> F. O., Holland, no. 14.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Prussia, no. 11. Lord Dalrymple, British ambassador at Berlin, had gone home for his health. Ewart remained as *chargé d'affaires* until August, 1788, when he became ambassador with full powers to sign the Anglo-Prussian treaty of that month.



"ne serviroit qu'à le compromettre seul, en pure perte".<sup>19</sup> Ewart reported that this reply had much irritated Frederick William; and the princess was aware of his change of front. What circumstance led her to believe that Great Britain was ready to intervene is matter for conjecture. Carmarthen, and still more so Pitt, had enjoined on Harris a policy of watchful but strict neutrality, and these orders were repeated on June 6. He was urged to prevent the break-up of the United Provinces, if possible; if it occurred, he might remove from the Hague with the deputies of the seceding provinces; but England must not be committed to a policy of intervention.<sup>20</sup>

On hearing, however, of the energy and hopefulness of the Princess of Orange, Carmarthen sent the following despatch to Harris. In view of the statement of French historians—*e. g.*, that of M. Dareste—"Il (*i. e.*, Pitt) nous prépara un échec diplomatique en Hollande"<sup>21</sup>—it should be noticed how exceedingly cautious and pacific was the tone of the British minister:

The communication made to the King of Prussia by the Princess of Orange can certainly in no degree pledge His Majesty, and perhaps it may be attended with advantage if the general idea that this country may possibly take some share in the events now depending is conveyed in this Manner to the French Court. At the same time His Majesty's servants think that the expressions, particularly the concluding part of the last par.—"qu'Elle prend Intérêt, que son discours au Parlement le prouve, et qu'Elle le montrera dans l'occasion"—seem to imply that H. M. had given some positive assurances that there might exist an occasion on which H. M. had already determined to take part by open interference if the constitution and independence of the Republic were in danger. I am persuaded you did not, and I hope the Princess did not, consider them as conveying this meaning, which would certainly go beyond the sentiments I have so often expressed to you and which are particularly repeated in my last despatch; that H. M.'s conduct in any future contingency must depend upon the view of many circumstances, which it has not yet been possible to ascertain, particularly the strength and exertions of the well affected part of the Republic.

He then added that Great Britain must not be involved in any intercourse which may take place between the Princess of Orange and the Prussian court; and that any arrangement between Great Britain and Prussia must depend on the international situation. The Emperor Joseph II. would be more likely to intervene effectively than Prussia.<sup>22</sup>

As has been hinted, the Dutch Question entered on a new phase when the Princess of Orange attempted to make her way into Hol-

<sup>19</sup> F. O., Prussia, no. 11, Ewart to Carmarthen, June 16 and 23.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, Holland, no. 14, Carmarthen to Harris, June 6, 1787.

<sup>21</sup> Dareste, *Histoire de France*, VII. 112.

<sup>22</sup> F. O., Holland, no. 15.

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land. She was stopped near Schoonhoven on the border of that province by a body of the Free Corps and was compelled by the decision of the States of Holland to return to Nimeguen. The motives which induced that princess to undertake the journey to the Hague, the change in the policy of Frederick William and of Pitt, and the discussions which ensued with France, are too complex to be set forth here. They will be recounted in the forthcoming work of the writer—"The Life and Times of William Pitt the Younger". Here it must suffice to quote some of the despatches which prove that the British government, while resolving to support the King of Prussia in his demand for complete reparation for the insult to his sister, yet continued to press for a friendly mediation of Great Britain, France and Prussia in Dutch affairs, such as had been mooted shortly before the occurrence of the incident at Schoonhoven. The following despatch of July 17, from Carmarthen to Ewart, was called forth by a report industriously circulated by Thulemeyer, and sent by him to Berlin, that in no case would England intervene by force on behalf of her partizans. The first sentence merely states that Ewart's despatch of July 7 had arrived yesterday. The despatch then continues:

No report could be falser than this—"That His Majesty had determined not to interfere at all in the Dutch affair, or that Mr. Pitt had made any representations against it"; and it is impossible that M. de Thulemeyer (if he in fact transmitted it) could believe it to be true. Altho' His [Britannic] Majesty would never set the example of foreign interference in the domestic concerns of the Republic, he could by no means see with indifference the attempts of any other Power to destroy its independence. And in fact H. M. has instructed His Minister at The Hague to observe attentively what was going on there with a view to any measures that might contribute to the restoration of harmony and the support of the constitution. You may add that H. M.'s first step in such a business would have been a direct communication with His Prussian Majesty, who, on account of the near relationship of the Princess of Orange towards His Prussian Majesty, and of his connections as so near a neighbour to the Republic, must be deeply interested in whatever concerns her, had not H. M. received repeated accounts from The Hague that the conduct of M. de Thulemeyer had been in uniform hostility to the interests of the House of Orange, and in direct concert with the emissaries of France—a circumstance which could not but shake the opinion H. M. would naturally have formed of the King of Prussia's sentiments on those subject. But if M. de Thulemeyer has ventured to pursue the conduct he has held without authority from his Court, and H. P. M. feels an interest in the independence of the Republic, in the preservation of its constitution, and in the support of the rights of the Stadtholder, H. M. will be extremely ready to enter into a most confidential communication with His Prussian Majesty on the means of preserving the essential objects I have just mentioned.

Carmarthen then stated that Montmorin had explicitly declared that France did not think herself authorized to intervene, as that would draw on an interference from other powers; that France desired to settle the dispute amicably by a joint mediation. His Majesty had not thought that

the Province of Holland could have been so mad as not to have instantly complied with His Prussian Majesty's very just demand of reparation and punishment. Any steps His Prussian Majesty may be under the necessity of taking on this occasion must be considered as totally distinct from an open interference in the domestic affairs of the Republic (which of course will depend on other grounds), and as only requiring that satisfaction which is due from one of the Provinces for a gross insult offered to H. P. M. in the person of his sister.

Carmarthen further states that the emperor is equally concerned in restoring order to his Netherlands; and he asks whether an agreement could not be arrived at, seeing that the Patriots are "*suspected of fomenting* the discontents in the Austrian Netherlands".

"Could such a good understanding be agreed on, there can be little doubt but the affairs of Holland would be settled in an amicable way to the satisfaction of all those who are interested in the welfare of the Republic."<sup>23</sup>

This last sentence of the draft of the despatch is in Pitt's handwriting, and it is significant that he should have appended a sentence of this markedly pacific tendency. The standpoint of the British government, therefore, was perfectly clear. One of the Dutch provinces had insulted the sister of the King of Prussia. It must apologize for that insult; and thereafter Great Britain, France, Prussia and the emperor could arrange for a joint mediation in the affairs of the United Provinces. France also did not at that time dispute the right of the Prussian monarch to gain satisfaction; and had she used her great influence in the States of Holland to procure an adequate apology, it is probable that such a mediation would have been amicably arranged. In order to gain further information on the complex constitutional questions there at issue the British government despatched Mr. William Wyndham Grenville (afterwards Lord Grenville) to the Hague, where he arrived on July 30. He was then joint paymaster of the forces and had undertaken no diplomatic duties; but his cool and practical nature qualified him for the task; and the long letters which passed between him, Pitt and others, from July 31 to August 20, when he returned, throw much light on the situation.<sup>24</sup> They prove the urgent desire of Pitt for a

<sup>23</sup> F. O., Prussia, no. 11, Carmarthen to Ewart, July 17, 1787. The proposal to include the emperor as mediator was soon dropped.

<sup>24</sup> See the Addenda in *Dropmore Papers*, III. 408 ff.; also two of the same letters (cut down) in the MSS. of P. V. Smith, reprinted in the Beaufort MSS.,

peaceful solution of the problem, but also his resolve to make preparations for war in case France threatened to intervene by force against the Prussians. In the British Foreign Office Records (France, no. 25) there is a draft of a despatch to Eden, dated Whitehall, August 10, 1787, entirely in Pitt's writing, and the official copy sent off is identical with it. Therein Pitt informed Eden of the rumored preparations by France which would thwart "the great work of conciliation which it is so much the object of the two Courts to forward and promote". He added that Great Britain would probably respond to the appeal of the loyal provinces, Friesland and Zeeland, for her intervention on their behalf, and then referred to the increasing violence of the Free Corps and the need of bringing about a complete cessation of hostilities before the mediation of the three powers could take place with effect. Eden had been authorized to propose that England and France should agree to discontinue their naval preparations until further notice; and on August 4 the French foreign minister acceded to this plan.<sup>25</sup> But it is clear that the entry of French volunteers into the United Provinces and the excesses of the Free Corps (as notified by Harris in his urgent despatch of August 20) led the British government to take more decided measures on August 24, as will presently appear.

Meanwhile the refusal of the States of Holland to accord adequate reparation to the King of Prussia led to the assembly of the expeditionary force at Wesel; but the vacillations at Berlin continued and were the cause of much perplexity to Hertzberg, Ewart and Harris. Dr. Luckwaldt has also shown that the force at Wesel was not ready to march by July 20, as M. de Witt had asserted, but was scarcely prepared by September 7, so the Duke of Brunswick averred.<sup>26</sup> In fact, the *dénouement* came very slowly, owing to the influence which the French party at Berlin brought to bear on the king, and the apprehensions which he entertained of Austria. His fears of a joint attack from France and the Hapsburg Power, together with the intrigues of Finckenstein at Berlin, Thulemeyer at the Hague, and the equally Francophile Goltz at Paris, probably account for the overture which the court of Berlin sent to that of Versailles in the third week of July, with a view to a joint mediation by those two governments alone in the Dutch Question. Had the three ministers above named solely directed the course of affairs, the

*Historical Manuscripts Commission Report*, XII., part ix., pp. 355-357; also the excellent monograph of Professor E. D. Adams, *The Influence of Grenville on Pitt's Foreign Policy* (Washington, 1904).

<sup>25</sup> F. O., France, no. 25, Eden to Carmarthen, August 4, 1787.

<sup>26</sup> Luckwaldt, *op. cit.*, p. 80, note; P. de Witt, *Une Invasion Prussienne en Hollande en 1787*, p. 235.

result would probably have been a shabby compromise. But Hertzberg, as he informed Ewart, had taken care to work on the susceptibilities of Frederick William by suggesting that any action conjointly with France would be impossible unless she consented to the following preliminary conditions: (1) a full reparation to the Prince and Princess of Orange for the insult; (2) the recognition of the Stadholder as forming an integral part of the Dutch constitution and not as a personage whose claims might be considered separately (as France had recently claimed); (3) a formal request emanating from the States General for the two powers to mediate; (4) the withdrawal of the troops of the province of Holland from the province of Utrecht, and an undertaking of Holland not to interfere with that or the other provinces; (5) the according permission immediately by the States of Holland to the princess to proceed to the Hague. Hertzberg informed Ewart that the king had accepted these conditions and that the court of Versailles would almost certainly reject them.<sup>27</sup>

This proved to be the case. The resolve of the French court to treat the insult as a negligible affair, and to regard the Prince of Orange as almost external to the Dutch constitution made a bad impression on the Prussian monarch, so Ewart reported on August 9; and, as the States of Holland still refused the required reparation, the question of a Franco-Prussian mediation lapsed. Nevertheless there was more wavering at Berlin, owing to some indiscreet words which Eden let fall at Versailles, probably to Count Goltz, which he transmitted to Berlin, implying that he [Eden] said "that the satisfaction [for the insult] was not a point worth enforcing by arms, and that the march of the Prussian troops must be in the way of the mediation [*sic*]". The report of these words, whether correct or not, produced a sensation at Berlin, and caused ministers to write at once to their envoy at London, Count Lusi, to inquire whether the British minister was about to change front. Of course it met with an entire denial; and Pitt, on September 8, sent a courteous but firm rebuke to Eden, accompanied with a request for an explanation of the incident. It is unfortunate that this part of his letter should have been omitted by the editor of the *Auckland Correspondence*, and quite needlessly, for in a letter of September 19 to Eden, Pitt frankly accepted Eden's explanation of "the supposed conversation between you and Baron Goltz".<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> F. O., Prussia, no. 11, Ewart to Carmarthen, July 17. See also Luckwaldt, *op. cit.*, pp. 65 ff.

<sup>28</sup> The parts omitted from the *Auckland Correspondence*, I. 191-192, are given in the MSS. of P. V. Smith in the Beaufort MSS., *Historical Manuscripts Commission Report*, XII., part ix., p. 357. See also the *Auckland Correspondence*, I. 198.

These intrigues of Goltz, Thulemeyer and others delayed the *entente* between Great Britain and Prussia; and it was not until definite assurances of support were sent from London to Berlin on August 24 that the diplomatic horizon began to clear. The more decided attitude then taken by the British government resulted from the accentuation of the crisis in Holland. Despite the pacific assurances showered by Montmorin upon Eden, which that envoy received in a very trustful spirit, it was obvious that French agents in Holland were doing their utmost to encourage the Patriots. Montmorin probably acted with sincerity, at least it is difficult to reconcile his resolve (formed about August 20) to recall the mischief-maker, Vêrac, with the duplicity of which Carmarthen more than once accused him in his despatches to Eden. Still, there can be no doubt that French volunteers strengthened the Free Corps, and that the confident expectation of French help rendered the States of Holland obdurate.<sup>29</sup> The despatches which Carmarthen forwarded to Harris, Ewart and Eden on August 24 show that the British government had then come to consider war as probable. Its alarm was probably caused by Harris's despatch of August 20 describing the march of a body of Free Corps towards the Hague, and his precautions in sending away the archives of the legation and in preparing to retreat with the Stadholder's friends to Brill, where they might be defended by British ships. The capture of the arsenal at Delft by the Free Corps also seemed imminent; and that event would deprive the Orange party of the munitions of war. On August 21 Harris described the capture of Delft; but probably the latter despatch was not received before Carmarthen wrote the decisive missives of August 24. That which he sent to Ewart had the effect of fixing the wavering purposes of the Prussian monarch (so our envoy stated in his despatch of September 4) and inducing him to forward the ultimatum to the States of Holland and to order the Duke of Brunswick to prepare for the advance. The arrival on September 7 of news concerning the rupture between Turkey and Russia helped to clinch the resolve of Frederick William; and even Finckenstein now favored armed intervention in Holland.<sup>30</sup> It is curious, as showing the close connection of all parts of the European system, that the resolve of the Sultan to break away from Russian tutelage should have sealed the doom of the democrats in Holland. But so it was. Russia and Austria were thenceforth too occupied

<sup>29</sup> There seem grounds for thinking that Ségur, who held the Ministry for War up to August, 1787, was responsible for this help to the Patriots.

<sup>30</sup> F. O., Prussia, Ewart to Carmarthen, September 8, 1787.

to combine against Prussia; and the court of Berlin had no fear of France alone, provided that help from England was assured.

Carmarthen's note of August 24 left no doubt on that point. While stating that Eden had been charged to induce the court of Versailles to acquiesce in Prussia's action, he added that steps were being taken to engage a body of Hessians for the British service. In a secret despatch of the same date he declared that, though naval preparations had been discontinued, Great Britain could send out at short notice a naval force fully equal to that of the French; she would support the King of Prussia, and would act quickly if the need arose.

In the despatch to Harris at the Hague (August 24, 1787) Carmarthen declared that, as France was arming, England would adopt precautionary measures; Lieutenant-General Fawcett had gone to Cassel for the purpose above named, and he would, if necessary, engage 5000 Hessians for the service of the provinces loyal to the Stadholder. A ship would be stationed at Harwich, charged with warlike stores, which Harris might summon if he thought fit.<sup>81</sup>

Equally significant is Carmarthen's despatch of August 24 to Eden at Versailles. In it he traversed the contention of the French government that their proposed camp at Givet was a natural and proper retort to the assembly of Prussian troops at Wesel. He declared that Great Britain, while entirely approving of the action of His Prussian Majesty in demanding satisfaction from the States of Holland, hoped that it might be obtained

without having recourse to extremities; and His Majesty would gladly contribute by all the means in his power to its being amicably arranged; but while the party in Holland persists in refusing this just demand, it appears to His Majesty perfectly just and natural that the King of Prussia should take the necessary steps for enabling him to support it with effect.

He then stated that France could have no interest in opposing this demand which was one of personal honor. If France disliked the King of Prussia's action she should prevail on her party in Holland to offer satisfaction to him. The next thing would be to arrange a suspension of hostilities in the United Provinces, which could be done only by breaking up the cordon of troops, limiting the forces in the provinces to the ordinary quota, and disarming the Free Corps. He then suggested that this might be so done as to give advantage to neither side, the Free Corps giving up their arms on the appointed day to commissioners named by the three mediating powers, who should prevent their recovery by either party unless the

<sup>81</sup> F. O., Holland, no. 17.

negotiations failed. In that case the arms would be returned to their former owners. The conduct of the province of Holland, however, rendered this plan precarious. Another suspicious circumstance was the number of French soldiers in the Free Corps. As for the Prussian proposals for a settlement, they had had the approval of His Majesty.<sup>32</sup>

The opinion of the British government, then, was that the action of the King of Prussia toward the province of Holland was an indispensable preliminary to the joint mediation of the three powers. Naturally enough, France demurred to this view, seeing that she was allied to the United Provinces by the treaty of 1785. The weak side of her case was that she did not persuade the States of Holland to make due reparation. Some of her historians, notably Count Barral de Montferrat, have treated the insult as a very trifling affair, which was adequately explained by the States of Holland.<sup>33</sup> But it is certain that the Prussian monarch did not, and could not, take that view. His hesitation to take decided action is to be regarded, not as a sign that he thought little of the affair, but rather as a proof of his mental instability and of the concern felt at Berlin for the isolation of Prussia and the hostility of Austria. Finally, on September 3, he took the step noticed before; but Ewart declared that he grounded his resolve partly on the reasoning of the Duke of Brunswick, that the seeking of reparation for the insult was distinct from the question of mediation. Grenville had gone to Nimeguen to confer with the Duke of Brunswick;<sup>34</sup> and it is probable that the advice which the duke forwarded to the King of Prussia came originally from Whitehall.

That the States of the province of Holland reckoned on armed help from France is clear from the fact that they rejected the Prussian ultimatum above referred to, and on September 9, 1787, sent a pressing request for help to the court of Versailles. Two of the burgomasters of Patriot towns, Utrecht and Gorcum, also proceeded to Paris a little later and expressed themselves to W. A. Miles as certain of securing it.<sup>35</sup> A favorable view of French policy may be seen in the Auckland Papers; but it is necessary to supplement them by documents drawn from the British Foreign Office. On September 4 the British envoy, William Eden, received a confidential note from Montmorin, which traversed the contentions of the British and Prussian governments described above. Montmorin defended the

<sup>32</sup> F. O., France, no. 25.

<sup>33</sup> Barral de Montferrat, *Dix Ans de Paix Armée* (1893), chs. XIII., XIV.

<sup>34</sup> *Dropmore Papers*, III. 413.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, III. 435



violent actions of the Free Corps in the United Provinces and even stated that the towns where they had forcibly changed the magistrates "ont déjà consommé la réforme: . . . c'est une affaire terminée". As for the Prince of Orange, he must abdicate in favor of his son. In view of the very critical state of French politics it is difficult to see why Montmorin (despite his personal leaning towards peace) should have adopted this provocative tone. Perhaps it was an attempt to browbeat Great Britain and Prussia. If such was his aim, he failed. On September 8, Carmarthen instructed Eden to protest against the excesses of the Free Corps, which were often officered by Frenchmen. He further stated that an unpleasant impression had been created at Whitehall by the delay of France to accede definitely to the proposals for a joint mediation and pacification of the United Provinces; that no mediation would be possible until the Free Corps were disarmed and disbanded; and that the conduct of England had in no wise changed.

The resulting interview of Eden with Montmorin on September 11 was "unpleasant". Montmorin upbraided Eden with the ceaseless suspicions of France harbored by the British government. He even charged it with seeking to amuse France with negotiations, while concocting hostile plans with Prussia. As for disarming the Free Corps, it was as impossible as to control the waves of the sea. France, he asserted, could only very slightly influence the Patriots. No settlement whatever could be arrived at if the Prussians advanced; and in that case hostilities must be the result. He then referred to the rupture between Russia and Turkey as an unfortunate event, and added that France would seek to prevent the destruction of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>36</sup> On September 13 he showed to Eden the appeal for help that had come from the States of Holland, which, he declared, France could not refuse. He accused England of inciting Prussia to this action, though, as he averred, perfectly satisfactory explanations had been given of the slight offered to the Princess of Orange.<sup>37</sup> The answer of the British government, on September 19, to these threatening declarations is too long to be quoted in full, but it may be thus summarized:

His Majesty feels deep regret at the resolve of the French court to take steps which so directly lead to a rupture. His Majesty still hopes to see the Dutch troubles peacefully settled; but he cannot be a quiet spectator of armed interference on the part of France.

<sup>36</sup> F. O., France, no. 26, Eden to Carmarthen, September 11, 1787. This last statement refutes that of Count Barral de Montferrat, *op. cit.*, p. 217, that Montmorin looked on the Eastern war as opening up more promising vistas for Prussia than Holland offered; e. g., a raid into Bohemia or Finland!

<sup>37</sup> *Auckland Journals*, I. 522-530.

The British government has not departed from its avowed intentions. M. Montmorin himself formerly expressed a desire for satisfaction to the King of Prussia, but no result accrued from it. The notes of the States of Holland resemble a justification more than an apology. The States General have often disavowed the acts of the States of Holland; and France, if she interferes, will "be supporting a party who act in direct opposition to the sentiments of that ally" (the United Provinces). His Majesty must therefore give orders for naval preparations; but he will strive to avert the evils of war, and will carry on the negotiations. No answer has been received to the British proposals in the despatch of August 24 for the basis of joint mediation. The violence of the Free Corps and the avowed inability of France to restrain them make it necessary that disarmament shall be the first of such proposals; but if this be impossible at the outset, it must take place in the sequel as a prelude to any settlement. The pay of the troops disbanded by the province of Holland must also be paid. For the rest, the Prussian proposals may well be taken as a basis, as Montmorin has not formally objected to them. The Stadholder must also be restored to his duties as captain-general, and to his powers as specified in 1766. If this is agreed to, very much may be hoped from the joint mediation of the three courts. No notice will be taken of the charges of insincerity against England.

Another despatch to Eden of the same date informed him that Grenville would at once proceed to Paris on a special mission. The instructions drawn up for his guidance, dated September 21, require him firstly to discover whether peace may be preserved. The chief points to be aimed at are the right of the King of Prussia to gain reparation for the insult to his family. The settlement of Dutch affairs must also be such as to preserve the constitution in its essential points, and authority must not be allowed to pass into the hands of those opposed to Great Britain. This must be distinctly stated to the French court, and any opposition to this must be regarded as a sign of hostility. Any changes in the *Règlements* of some of the provinces must be referred to the free deliberations of their States. Any attempt of the French court to protract the discussions must be discouraged as far as possible.

Other despatches of the same date to Harris and Ewart make it clear that the British government still looked forward to a joint mediation of the three powers. The obvious inability of France to draw the sword did not lead the British cabinet to decide to oust her from the proposed mediation. On the contrary, if she had recognized the facts of the situation, or showed a desire to co-operate on

the lines above described, she could have played her part in the solution of the problem. Why she decided to hold entirely aloof is hard to fathom; but the facts now to be set forth may help us to a surmise which seems to suit the facts of the case.

The Prussians crossed the Dutch frontier on September 13. The resistance of the Free Corps was easily overcome; and the Prince of Orange entered the Hague on September 20, amidst the enthusiasm of the citizens, a majority of whom had favored his cause there as in the rural districts of the province of Holland. In fact, the feeble stand made by the Patriots against a force of about 25,000 men proves that they had not the bulk of the nation on their side. The Dutch, when united and determined, have ever made a stubborn defense of their land.

Harris clinched the triumph of the Orange party by inducing the States of Holland to reverse their decrees against the Stadholder and to rescind their resolution of September 9 appealing for armed help from France. As this action deprived the court of Versailles of all excuse for armed intervention, the despatch describing it deserves to be quoted nearly in full, especially as it has been (very strangely) omitted from the *Malmesbury Diaries*.

#### HARRIS TO CARMARTHEN.

No. 125.

HAGUE, Friday, 21 Sept., 1787.

I have succeeded in carrying through the States of Holland the Resolution I mentioned to your Lordship last night, but not without some difficulty; as, although all the towns except Amsterdam, Alkmaer and Hoorn are come round, it was in such direct contradiction to the sentiments they expressed a fortnight ago that they wished to defer it. I however insisted on the importance of the measure and on the necessity of celerity, and I succeeded.

This morning early I collected a few of my most confidential friends to agree on the terms in which this Resolution should be conceived, and I have the honor to enclose it, as we then drew it up, and as it has since passed. It was brought forward by Dordt<sup>28</sup> (a singular circumstance), seconded by the Equestrian Order, and, after a slight opposition on the part of Leyden and Gouda, carried unanimously. Sixteen towns out of the 19 were present. It will be despatched tonight to Versailles, and be communicated to M. Caillard, *chargé des affaires de France*, this evening. As far as my judgment reaches, it seems calculated to remove every pretext for the interference of France; or, if that Court does now interfere, it will put her so much in the wrong that she cannot claim or expect the assistance of any of her allies in a war which will have been entirely of her own seeking.

Besides the infinite advantages that always attend quick measures, I was anxious to get this through before the Prince of Orange took his Seat in the Estates of Holland in order that France might not throw

<sup>28</sup> Dort had recently sided against the Stadholder.

the odium of it on His Highness and make use of it as a handle to keep alive the resentment of her party against him.<sup>39</sup>

The news of this crowning diplomatic success reached London on September 25, and Paris probably about the same time. Certainly Grenville knew of it before he had his first interview with Montmorin, on September 28. The letter which Grenville wrote to Pitt at Calais on September 23, in reply to one informing him of the first successes of the Prussians, shows that he fully appreciated the need of the conciliatory methods which Pitt had just prescribed.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, his conduct throughout was eminently cautious, though he now foresaw that France would give up the game as hopeless.

He found Montmorin reserved and cold. That minister declared that the principles which might formerly have been applicable to the Dutch problem were not so, now that Prussia had 25,000 men on Dutch soil. They must withdraw before negotiations could proceed. Grenville then sought to induce him to cancel the *Déclaration* which the French government had issued on September 16 as to its resolve to aid the province of Holland; but received the reply that it had been called forth by the march of the Prussian troops and would be annulled only when they retired; and he replied in similar terms to Grenville's suggestion that Great Britain and France should agree to discontinue their armaments. To this Grenville made answer that he could not with propriety discuss the question of the Prussian evacuation; and that the Dutch Question must be put in the way of a settlement before they retired. Montmorin then pressed him to draw up a plan of pacification; but this he declined to do, as it would be *ultra vires*.<sup>41</sup>

Their interview on October 1 was equally unsatisfactory; and a joint conference held by Grenville and Eden with Montmorin on October 2 was also without result, the French minister refusing to negotiate while the Prussians were in possession. Foreseeing no good from the continuance of these discussions, Grenville decided to return to London to apprise Pitt of the state of affairs. The cabinet fully approved his action and expressed surprise at the protests of France. But in point of fact the letters that passed between Pitt and Grenville show that both of them had divined the secret of the situation, that France could not draw the sword. As Pitt remarked, the chief danger was that she would be *hooted* into war by the populace.<sup>42</sup> Seeing that the force at Givet had not begun to

<sup>39</sup> F. O., Holland, no. 18.

<sup>40</sup> For Pitt's letters of September 21 and 22 to Grenville, see the *Dropmore Papers*, III. 426, 427. For Grenville's mission, see E. D. Adams, *op. cit.*, pp. 6, 7.

<sup>41</sup> F. O., France, no. 26, Grenville to Carmarthen, September 28, 1787.

<sup>42</sup> *Dropmore Papers*, III. 430-436.

assemble by the end of September,<sup>43</sup> the chief aim of the French minister seems to have been to back out of the dispute with as little loss of dignity as possible. The device of refusing to negotiate so long as the Prussians were in the United Provinces was well suited to this end; but it compelled France to look on in impotent wrath at the course of events in Holland, which reversed the masterful policy of Vergennes.

The truth seems to be that, in view of the protracted strife between the Crown and the Paris Parlement, the desperate state of the finances, and the need of watching closely the crisis in the Orient, Montmorin had decided that France must on no account go to war over the Dutch Question. On this topic he opened his heart with indiscreet fullness after a private dinner which he and Eden had together on Thursday, September 19. In the course of the conversation, which Eden reported as follows to Whitehall, Montmorin admitted that England's policy had been consistent. So far as his own feelings were concerned, he would tender the following advice to his sovereign:

If the Estates of Holland should prove so defenceless, or so intimidated as to give way to whatever might be forced under the present attack, he should advise the Most Christian King not to engage in a war, but, protesting against the conduct, to give refuge and protection at any practicable expense to all who might be driven from their country and might seek it. On the contrary, if the situation of things should prove such as to give a prospect of assisting with a hope of maintaining the Dutch constitution, and to protect an allied Province against a foreign attack, he would advise France to do it by all the means within her power. In the course of the conversation he gave me explicitly to understand, what he has often alluded to, that he has personally disliked the whole pursuit [*sic*] in Holland, and has wished in vain to find means to get creditably out of it, and also that he feels a solicitude to have the means of turning his attention more compleatly [*sic*] to the other side of Europe. My inference from the whole conversation was that, if the settling of the business in Holland can be accomplished speedily and effectually, and if immediate means are taken by [illegible] measures to moderate and reconcile all discontents within the [United] Provinces, a war will be avoided, which this country is ill prepared to undertake; and more especially at a moment when such exertions as she can make will be more urged towards another Quarter. I have been obliged to state this with some haste, but it appeared to me important, and I hope that I have made it intelligible.

I have etc.

WM. EDEN.<sup>44</sup>

Probably these views of Montmorin were shared by Loménie de Brienne, Malesherbes and Lamoignon. Two ministers, Ségur and Castries, who had favored a forward policy at the Hague, had

<sup>43</sup> *Dropmore Papers*, III. 435.

<sup>44</sup> F. O., France, no. 26.

recently retired. The peace party therefore carried the day. Eden reported on September 16 that France had made efforts to induce Austria, Spain and even Saxony to espouse her cause.<sup>45</sup> Apparently, they came to naught; and the decision of the men of Amsterdam on October 6 to come to terms with the Duke of Brunswick, who had recently been blockading their city, seems to have quenched the last efforts of the war party at Versailles.

This unexpected turn of events naturally played into the hands of the Stadholder's party. That the British government felt the irregularity of the situation is clear from Carmarthen's despatch of October 5 to Harris. In it Carmarthen declared that all the operations of the Duke of Brunswick should be connected with the original demand for satisfaction to the King of Prussia, so as to prevent France from describing them as a direct interference in the internal affairs of that republic; for the apology to the King of Prussia was incomplete while an armed force protected the persons of those who had insulted the princess. No qualms as to the propriety of their proceedings seem to have troubled the Prussians and the Orange party. We may detect Pitt's hand in the following sentence: "It is certainly His Majesty's wish, as soon as the object in Holland is securely obtained, to terminate the business in such a way as may enable this country to disarm." This consummation was reached by the *Déclaration* and *Contre-Déclaration* signed by the British and French ministers at Versailles on October 27, in the latter of which Montmorin put forth the surprising assertion that it had never been the intention of His Most Christian Majesty forcibly to intervene in Dutch affairs.

The Orange reaction naturally brought about the formation of an Anglo-Dutch alliance, which replaced that with France. The details of the treaty, signed by Harris and Van der Spiegel at the Hague on April 15, 1788, are well known. The most unsatisfactory part of it was that relating to the proposed restitution to the United Provinces of Negapatam, which had been ceded to Great Britain in May, 1784. Negotiations were to be set on foot for its restitution within six months; but they never took place; and much soreness was the result. The Prusso-Dutch treaty, signed at Berlin on April 15, 1788,<sup>46</sup> served to bind together those states and to pave the way for the Triple Alliance of that year between England, Prussia and the United Provinces, which during three years gave the law to the north of Europe.

The events of 1787-1788 were therefore of far more than local

<sup>45</sup> F. O., France, no. 26.

<sup>46</sup> See Hertzberg, *Recueil*, II. 444-448; Garden, *Traité*s, V. 92-93.

interest. They consolidated the position of the House of Orange, and, though their effects vanished for a time in the whirlwind of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, yet they pointed the way to the establishment of monarchy in 1814. Far different was the outcome of affairs in France. There the old order of things tottered under the blow dealt by England and Prussia. All the world expected Louis XVI. to draw the sword; and probably he would have strengthened his position and undermined that of the Parlements had he adopted a spirited policy and aroused a national feeling. As it was, he rattled the sword in the scabbard and then issued the extraordinary *Contre-Déclaration* of October 27 that he had never intended to draw it. A more fatuous and fatal policy cannot be conceived. It was a public confession that France could not fight, even on behalf of an ally; and Napoleon afterwards named it as one of the chief causes of the French Revolution.

In truth, the court of Versailles committed every possible blunder. Its agents in Holland, notably Vêrac, encouraged the Dutch Patriots to push matters to an extreme, though Montmorin all along doubted the wisdom of going to war on their behalf. A little later he confessed to Eden his mistake in not recalling Vêrac long before the troubles came to a climax. This is perfectly true; for, as has been shown, the warlike attitude adopted by the British court on August 24 resulted solely from the aggressions of the Free Corps and the intrigues of Vêrac. Carmarthen continued to accuse Montmorin of duplicity, but he may rather be charged with weakness in not checking the actions of Ségur and in not recalling Vêrac by the spring of 1787. Whatever may be our verdict on the motives that actuated Montmorin, he certainly helped to dig the grave of the old monarchy.

British policy, on the other hand, was active, intelligent and prompt to take advantage of events. Harris played the long uphill game at the Hague with skill, boldness and tenacity. In all probability he did not suggest the journey of the Princess of Orange from Nimeguen to the Hague, though that has generally been credited to him. The evidence seems to show that it was the outcome of her daring and resourceful spirit. But Pitt and Carmarthen at once discerned the results that might accrue from that event. They awaited a favorable opportunity; and the outbreak of war in the East came just in time to clinch the long wavering purposes of the King of Prussia. There are few episodes in modern history which more easily and swiftly brought about an entirely new diplomatic situation, or from which greater results were to spring.

J. HOLLAND ROSE.